



EmployeeUPDATE

Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.

A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

North Carolina hosts flu summit

North Carolina is planning for a pandemic flu and will respond to a pandemic just as it has to past natural disasters, but it needs more federal dollars to be prepared. That was the message from Gov. Mike Easley when he hosted the state's first pandemic flu summit on March 21.

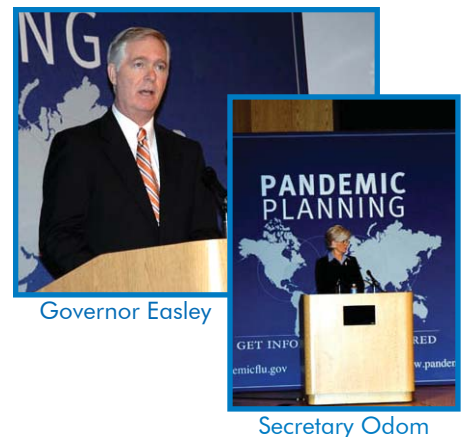
"In North Carolina, we will not look to the federal government to ride in, mid-pandemic, to save us," Easley said. "We were one of the first states in the nation to create a pandemic flu response plan and our emergency workers will be ready to lead the charge on the front line, but it is going to take a bigger federal investment."

Easley noted that the federal government has allotted \$350 million to be used by state and local government to prepare for a pandemic flu and that North Carolina's portion of \$2.5 million "will not cut it."

Easley was joined by top federal and state public health and homeland security officials at the summit. At the request of the federal government, all states are holding pandemic flu summits.

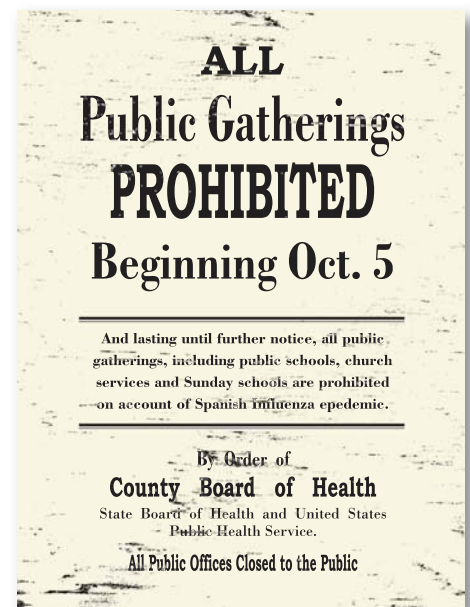
In addition to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, who is speaking at all of the state summits, North Carolina also hosted U.S. Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, who released checklists to help child care, colleges and universities prepare for a possible pandemic.

Much of the summit was dedicated to explaining state and federal efforts to plan for a pandemic flu. More information about state efforts, including a video of the summit, is available at www.ncpublichealth.org; more information about federal efforts, including a series of checklists to help citizens, businesses and government prepare for a pandemic flu, are available at www.pandemicflu.gov. ■



Governor Easley

Secretary Odom



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What is a pandemic flu?

Many people find this whole talk of pandemic flu and avian flu confusing. There are three types of flu:

1. **Seasonal flu.** *This is the regular flu that hits every year during the colder months. Most people have some immunity to this flu and a shot is available. This year's flu season is just about over, and it was a mild year, with less flu activity than in the past couple of seasons.*
2. **Avian flu.** *Since 1997, birds in Asia have been falling prey to a strain of the flu. While many birds have died as a result of the avian flu, a very small number of humans have also died. These people lived or worked very closely with infected birds. In order for the avian flu to become a big concern to humans, it would have to mutate into something that could readily infect human to human. The fear is that someone infected with the seasonal flu will become infected with the avian flu and the new virus will be so substantially unlike past human viruses that people will not have any immunity to the virus. So, far this hasn't happened and scientists aren't sure if it will.*
3. **Pandemic flu.** *This is a new virus. Because people would have no natural immunity and there would not be an immediately available vaccine, large numbers of people would become infected. This is the flu that everyone is planning for. Right now there is no pandemic. No one knows when one will occur, but they do occur routinely; there were three pandemics during the 20th century.*

ENLARGE FACILITIES FOR TREATING SICK

Dr. Stiles Hopes For Best,
Prepares For Worst.

Situation Looks Better From Some
Angles and Worse From Others.
State Board of Health Sending
Eight Doctors.

LIBERTY COMPANY EQUIPS HOSPITAL

Wood Building Converted Into
Emergency Hospital.

Has Been Fitted Out and Filled With
Patients Since Noon Yesterday—
Remarkable Feat of Shipyard
Officials.

RED CROSS SOCIETY APPROPRIATES FUND

\$2,500 to Help Wipe Out
Epidemic of Influenza.

Action Taken at Meeting of Executive
Committee of Local Chapter Yesterday
Morning — Mayor's Committee
Doing Good Work.

Dept. Gets Workforce Coordinator, New DSS Director



Sherry Bradsher

Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom announced that DSS Director Pheon Beal will become a special advisor on workforce issues and that DSS Deputy Director Sherry Bradsher will move into the director's role.

"Much of what we do across this department is designed to improve

North Carolina's workforce so that it is better able to meet the demands of the 21st century" said Hooker Odom. "Whether it is helping laid off workers get assistance, training people with special needs to become a vital part of the work force or working with our partners to "improve the workforce in areas like healthcare, DHHS is very involved.

Hooker Odom said she had asked Beal "to devote her attention to workforce issues across DHHS and its divisions.

"No one is more qualified to lead this effort. Pheon was instrumental to the creation of our Work First program," Hooker Odom said. "Today, thousands of families have achieved economic independence thanks to her efforts. In her new position, she will be able to continue that fine work."

Hooker Odom praised Beal's work as DSS director, a position she has held for almost four years.

"I hate to see Pheon leave DSS because the division has consistently had a high rate of success under leadership," she said. "But, I know that quality will continue with Sherry at the helm. Sherry has a long history with DSS at the state and local level. She began her career 20 years ago as a social worker with the Greene County Department of Social Services. Since that time she has held a number of positions at both the county and state level. Sherry knows what DSS is like at all levels. She knows what it is like to be a social worker on the front line, but she also knows how to manage and supervise complex organizations and budgets."

Both changes are effective April 1. ■

"Well at Work" is up and running!

Public health employees got a division-wide jump-start on workplace wellness on March 20 with health screenings, exercise and nutrition classes, walks and runs. "Well at Work" celebration events were held at the North Raleigh Six Forks DPH campus; in downtown Raleigh at the Cooper, Cotton and Bath buildings; and in Concord and Greenville for regional staff.

Employees learned about workplace ergonomics, healthy snacking, and good-for-you lunches, and got to try stretching and desk exercises, yoga and aerobics. They were given information on quitting tobacco and on misuse of alcohol—along with an opportunity to "walk the line" wearing special "drunk driver" glasses provided by Forensic Tests for Alcohol's "BAT" Mobile Unit.

They also got information packets stuffed with health tips, goodie bags, coupons for restaurants, workout passes for a local gym, discounts for parts and accessories at a bike shop, and a chance to vie for door prizes.

The events kicked off the Division of Public Health's workplace wellness program. Ongoing events are being encouraged and supported, such as

Cont. on page 10



Jalil Isa

iSalud y Saludos!

Latinos and Skiing

During the past month or two, I've attempted to do as much 'last-minute' skiing as possible. I was in Colorado a couple of months ago; then went to Montreal and Quebec City—where I ripped through the beautiful slopes of Le Massif; and just recently tried my luck at Virginia's Wintergreen and at Sugar Mountain during their last weekend of skiing for the 2005-2006 season.

One thing that struck me about the resorts, particularly the first and last two, were the number of Hispanics working them. I find this amusing because chances are they're like me and didn't even get a taste of snow until late in the game. In my case, a lifetime spent in Miami early on—combined with a depressing economic situation that prevented virtually any kind of recreational travel—made it impossible for me to travel far enough to see snow for the first time until I was 15. I fell in love with this meteorological phenomenon and decided to take my relationship with snow to a new level two years later. That's when I tried snow skiing for the first time. I haven't gotten off the slopes since. And now I'm proud to say I'm a double-diamond skier. I may not look elegant coming down the mountain...but I can come down most terrains.

The first time that I encountered the Latino workforce at a ski resort was a few years ago at Sugar Mountain in

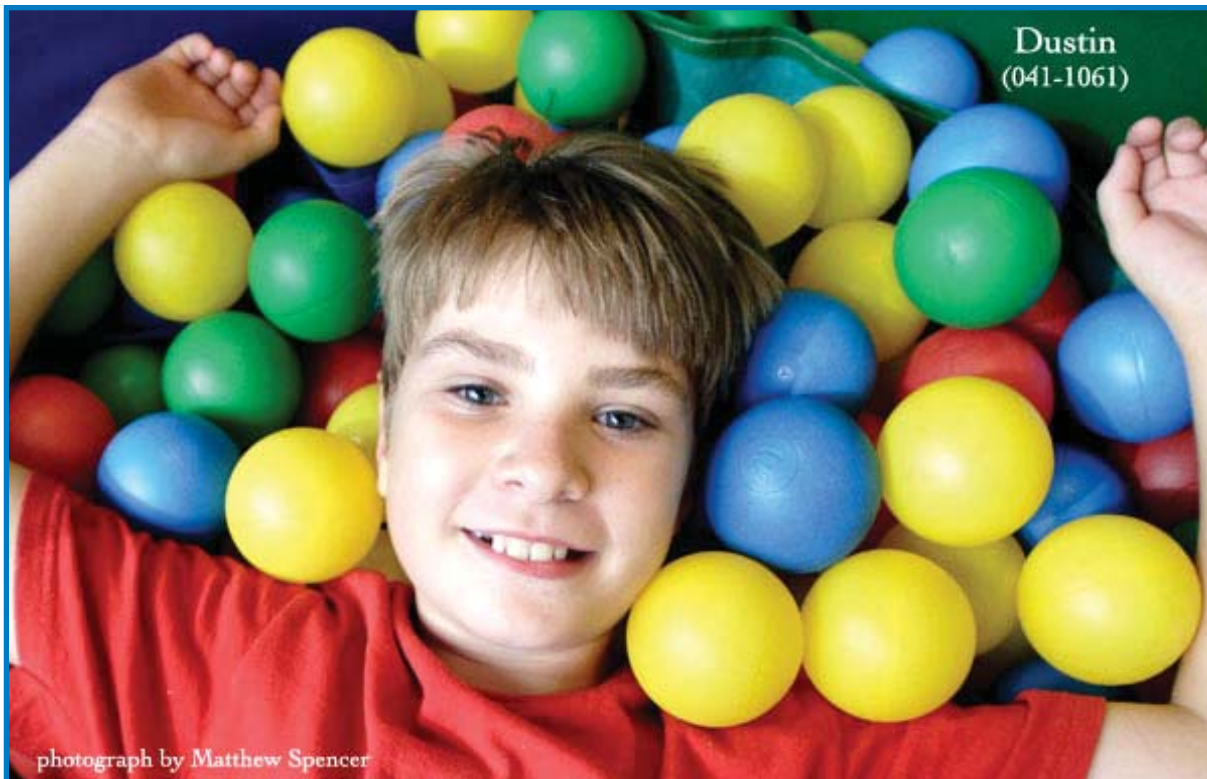
western North Carolina. I remember waiting at a parking lot for a shuttle bus to transport me to the base of the mountain. Suddenly, I heard what sounded like an indiscernible language coming from the direction of the two parking lot attendants. Both looked Central American. But their language...their language wasn't Spanish. I abruptly realized these individuals were speaking a Central American indigenous language! It was my first time hearing one of these languages—of the many—that are still spoken throughout many parts of Central America. I approached them and they quickly switched to their other native language offering more common ground: Spanish. They soon told me how they had ended up working there and how different it was from what they were used to back home.

Recently at Virginia's Wintergreen, I came across a rather large group of South Americans who had been employed by the resort through a special employment agency in their home countries. In this case, Wintergreen contracted with this employment agency to supply young workers from countries such as Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Brazil—to name a few. The employer officially 'sponsored' these workers while they were on break from their university studies. While many South Americans live in places that aren't far from ski resorts (the

nearly six million inhabitants of Chile's capital, Santiago, for example, reside less than an hour away from ski slopes), the vast majority spend a lifetime without getting an up-close view of the white, fluffy stuff.

While I sort of feel like the residents of the Triangle were mostly cheated from a local winter wonderland this year, most of the folks who've lived in this area for a while have had their fair share of snow encounters in the past. But for those newcomers who are arriving from countries south of the border, it's unlikely they've had much contact whatsoever with this kind of weather. This is why I can't help but be amused at the irony that many of these individuals would find themselves working at a ski resort—tackling a new sport they may have only seen on television, experiencing weather they may have only imagined, and coping as best they can with the new conditions. For some, like myself, the experience is novel and glorious. But undoubtedly, not everyone takes to the wintry weather with the grin that I do. For those who are just there for the work... they make the most of it. They do what they can to survive. And regardless of the conditions they often face, are just grateful for the opportunity. Let's see what kinds of conditions future seasons await us. ■

Heart Gallery Exhibits, April 2 through June 4



The *North Carolina Traveling Heart Gallery* showcasing “Portraits with a Purpose” by leading North Carolina photographers is designed to raise awareness about foster care and adoption.

More than two dozen award-winning photographers have poured their hearts into photographing 35 of the 850 North Carolina children in foster care who are currently awaiting permanent families. Many of the children featured in this exhibit are older or are part of a sibling group, traditionally considered more difficult to place in adoptive homes. The resulting portraits, will be on display in several cities across North Carolina from April 2 through June 4. Adoption portrait works of the photographers may be viewed at www.ncheartgallery.org.

The public is invited to attend opening receptions in Raleigh, Winston-Salem, and Greenville where questions regarding adoption and foster care will be answered.

Raleigh: April 2 – 14, Cameron Village Library
Reception April 2, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Raleigh: May 15 – May 19
Lobby, Legislative Building

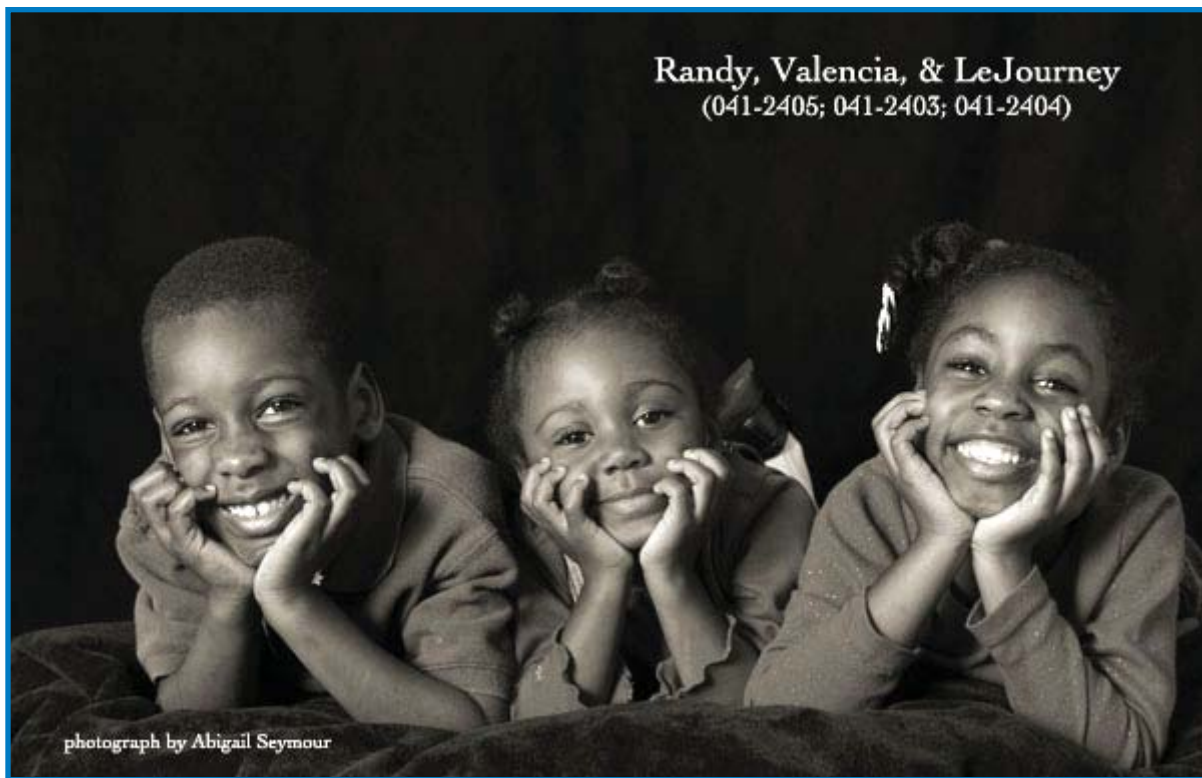
Davidson: April 21 – 23
Young Master’s Studio
Contact studio for hours

Greenville: May 20 – June 4
Eastern Carolina University
Mendenhall Student Center
Reception May 21
Student Event Center,
2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Winston-Salem: May 1 – 12
Sawtooth Center

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Heart Gallery cont. from page 5



The purpose of the Heart Gallery is to educate people about foster care and adoption. “These photographs capture the character and essence of children in a way that snapshots just can’t,” said LaDonna Wattley, Community Outreach Specialist for NC Kids. “We are so grateful to the wonderful photographers who have donated their time and talent to make the Heart Gallery a reality. These portraits are true works of art.”

NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network provides information on North Carolina’s adoption and foster care program, and help families connect with agencies. It is a program of the North Carolina Division of Social Services through a partnership with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The original Heart Gallery opened in Santa Fe, New Mexico in spring 2001. Since then, nearly 60 similar exhibits have resulted in hundreds of adoptions, including some by the photographers themselves. Heart Galleries have been featured on the annual CBS special “A Home for the Holidays,” on National Public Radio, CNN, ABC, and in the New York Times, People, and Parade magazines. For more information on foster care and adoption call NC Kids at 877-625-4371 or visit www.adoptnckids.org. ■



Central Region Hospital One Year In

April marks the first anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Central Region Psychiatric Hospital, now under construction in Butner. According to DHHS Property and Construction Director Terry Hatcher, crews have almost completed all the steel construction as well as most of the “rough-in” work in what will become the patient care unit. He reports that the work crews are already installing plumbing, electrical and conduit work in many parts of the site. Some parts of the construction site have already had floor slabs poured and some of the roofing slabs should be completed by next month. Hatcher says they hope to get the hospital’s utility plant – which will provide the hospital’s heating, air conditioning and water – on line by early summer. For more on the hospital, go to www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/newhospital.



New addresses for our websites

About the Website Redesign

DHHS has a new address. Try it: type www.ncdhhs.gov into your browser and go to the department's home page. Over time, www.dhhs.state.nc.us will be phased out.

The new URL is part of the website redesign project that will allow the entire department to have short, easy-to-remember website addresses. Best of all, the website has the .GOV designation, eliminating the confusion of a .com or .org extension.

Programs will be able to have home pages with short URLs that are easy to remember and short enough to publish on a brochure. The general construction of the program URL

should be: www.ProgramName.ncdhhs.gov. The program name should be framed in a positive fashion, not a negative one. For instance, PreventRabies.ncdhhs.gov is preferable to rabies.ncdhhs.gov.

URLs can use "camel case" to differentiate words, for example, PreventRabies.ncdhhs.gov, not preventrabies.ncdhhs.gov. Camel case makes the address more readable without adding any information. Since URLs are not case sensitive, the user does not have to remember or type in the capitals.

The new URLs are aliases; that is, the existing website directory structure

does not change, and the existing home page will still work. Alias URLs for DHHS programs must be specific, descriptive and not overly broad. For instance, 'JobAssistance.ncdhhs.gov' should not be assigned to one program if other programs in the department also offer job assistance.

It is possible for programs to obtain these URLs before the website redesign is complete. Complete URL guidance is published at www.ncdhhs.gov/redesignproject or contact Lois Nilsen at 715-4394. ■

Middle school students adopt soldier



L-R: Tranae Harris, Cody Mathes and Brett Reynolds

Students at Jeter Hall Middle School, at the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton, have adopted an American soldier. Brett Reynolds, 25, of Lincolnton, serves in the United States Army, and was deployed to Afghanistan in spring 2005. Reynolds is a friend of Kristin Todd, a teacher in the NCSD middle school.

The students have enjoyed gathering items for care packages and making cards to send to Reynolds. Nothing excites the students more than receiving e-mails and pictures from him. They have gained an appreciation for the sacrifices that soldiers make to serve the citizens of our country.

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Rowe-West receives national immunization award

Congratulations are in order as Immunization Branch Head, Beth Rowe-West, R.N., B.S.N. was named the recipient of the Natalie J. Smith Immunization Champion Award at the National Immunization Conference in Atlanta in early March.

This award, presented annually by the Association of Immunization Manager (AIM), is the highest form of recognition for Immunization Program Managers. It was created in 2003 to recognize outstanding contributions in immunization and honor the dedicated service, leadership, and legacy of Natalie Smith, MD, MPH, and Deputy Director for the National Immunization Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The award recognizes an individual, project, team or organization that has made a specific and significant contribution to the field of immunization, demonstrated exceptional leadership and worked diligently to foster partnerships to support immunization program efforts.

Rowe-West's role in the implementation of the North Carolina Immunization Registry, her dedication to reducing the impact of vaccine-preventable diseases, and her quest to promote universal vaccine coverage for every child in NC are just three of the many reasons why she was honored with this award.

A native of Wilson County, Rowe-West graduated from the UNC-Greensboro School of Nursing and worked at Thomasville's Community General Hospital



Beth Rowe-West

and the Davidson County Health Department before moving to the state's Immunization Branch of the Division of Public Health in the Department of Health and Human Services in 1994. She has been Head of the Immunization Branch since 1998. ■

Middle school cont. from page 8

In December, Reynolds was home for a short vacation and was able to visit NCSD. Students were ready with many questions and were very respectful to their adopted soldier. They formed lines to shake his hand. They also planned a fitting surprise "Welcome Home" celebration, with patriotic décor. The students planned a special Italian lunch, catered by their own NCSD cafeteria. Lizbeth Lizaro, a seventh-grader, led the group in signing The Pledge of Allegiance. The students made "Welcome Home" cards and noted their appreciation for Reynolds' hard work overseas. Parents sent money to purchase a gift certificate for Reynolds

so he could enjoy a satisfying dinner out during his short time at home.

Reynolds' company is scheduled to return home in spring 2006, and the middle school students at NCSD will be ready for another homecoming celebration. ■

"Well at Work" cont. from page 3

StairWELL exercise programs and regular walking clubs. Walking maps for several locations are posted in buildings, and some are also available on the "Professionals" section of the **EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com** web site. ■



Michael Sanderson, DPH worksite wellness coordinator, tells the crowd about the Six Forks campus events while State Health Director Leah Devlin stands ready to greet employees as they enter the building.



A Public Health employee tries to pass a sobriety test while wearing special goggles provided by the Blood Alcohol Testing ("BAT") Mobile Unit. The goggles simulate the effect of several drinks on a person's perceptions and balance.

NC Disability Determination Services goes electronic

NC Disability Determination Services has received certification from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to process disability claims in a fully electronic environment. DDS received official certification in late February to use the electronic disability folder as the official record for Social Security disability claims.

This is a milestone in SSA's history and in the history of the NC DDS. This move to a fully electronic environment places the DDS at the forefront of customer service and as a leader in the utilization of technology.

The electronic folder is the electronic repository used to store disability information that is currently stored in the paper folder. It is a storage system involving many different sources of information and data. The electronic folder allows components to share disability case information without having to move a paper folder between various components.

"The challenges were many and the opportunities never ceased," said Rhonda Currie, NC DDS Administrator. "We were glad to finally arrive at this moment in the journey. Much has been accomplished since this process began in July 2003."

The NC DDS served as the nation's pilot state for electronic disability claims processing. The journey



The NC DDS IDA Team left to right : Linda Randolph, IDA Team coordinator, Tony Barnette, IT Manager and overall project Manager, Clothilda Brown, Sandra Morgan, Gene McCabe and Anne Page

involved several stages of implementation including imaging of medical records; on site and off-site scanning of documents; receiving medical records electronically from medical providers; and revising DDS business process. Once a claim becomes electronic the claim will remain electronic through any subsequent reviews. The electronic folder gives authorized employees immediate and simultaneous access to disability claims file.

North Carolina became the 27th state to receive certification and celebrated the accomplishment on March 7.

Certificates recognizing this achievement were presented to all agency components. NC DDS used the celebratory slogan "Slam Dunk" to commemorate this accomplishment. ■



Lisa Presson unit supervisor with her certificate indicating her unit has completed all required competencies and is certified to process disability claims totally electronically.



Leon Rhodes, Assistant Regional Commissioner of Management Support from the Atlanta Social Security Administration